



TACKLING WORKLOAD TOGETHER

THE WORKLOAD CHARTER



We are here
to make great
schools and
happier, stronger
communities so
that people have
better lives.



The way we do this is by: always doing what is right; trusting in each other and standing shoulder to shoulder and doing what we know makes the difference. Doing what is right means always acting with integrity, in the interests of others and being honest, open and transparent. Our trust continues to be about delivering excellence, but in a sustainable way. Our schools operate in an environment of high professional trust and with high levels of accountability.



OUR PROMISE



We recognise that the commitment and care shown by all staff are fundamental to the success of our students and we promise our staff that they will be supported, encouraged, respected and provided with an enjoyable and rewarding working environment. The trust is dedicated to developing, growing and retaining talented leaders and staff across the trust and nothing is more important than staff development. We want our schools to be places where people want to work and choose to stay. For too long in too many English schools, staff have been asked to choose between being seen as good at their job and being a good mum, dad, partner, son, daughter or friend. We say, “no more”. While we are far from perfect, we will do everything we can to support our staff to balance the demands of their jobs and those at home, and we recognise that in everyone’s life there are good times and bad. It is the job of all of us to support each other through both.

CULTURE

The culture of the trust and our schools is critical in ensuring we have an enjoyable, rewarding working environment in which all colleagues believe the demands of their job are reasonable and manageable. It is essential that our schools are led in an ethical way that is driven by moral purpose. Many of the difficulties that staff experience in schools come from a high stakes accountability system that can drive leaders to behave in ways that increase stress and anxiety for staff. We insist that our leaders do everything they can to guard against this, that they set a good example in how they behave and that they try to reduce levels of stress and anxiety in the organisation. Seeking to reduce the number of tasks staff undertake is likely to have little effect on improving work/home balance if this happens within a toxic culture and an environment of high threat. To support this we offer training and development for our managers and leaders to ensure they are able to translate the vision and values into behaviours which are built on the principles of dignity, respect, professionalism and integrity.

We start from an assumption of professional trust and the belief that everyone seeks to do a good job. Leaders should be clear that processes of quality assurance and performance development are, for most staff, about recognising great practice and supporting colleagues in their professional commitment to get better at their jobs. They are absolutely not about surveillance and catching people out. In order for this to be a reality, processes must operate within a spirit of openness and transparency and staff must be made to feel confident to raise any concerns or issues they have. Part of the assessment of leaders' performance is the effectiveness with which they contribute to developing a thriving culture of openness, honesty and kindness, in which ***we make the lives of staff better as well of those of young people.***

WORKLOAD

Recruitment and retention in schools is becoming increasingly challenging. Evidence shows that workload is cited as the main reason teachers leave the profession. Workload can include various aspects of teachers' working lives, including marking, planning, preparation, monitoring, evaluation and data collection. The trust recognises it has a duty of care towards its staff and is committed to working with its recognised trade unions to clarify workload expectations, supporting staff to achieve a healthy work-home balance. This commitment is genuine and sincere and it applies to everyone in the trust. Leaders are expected to demonstrate this commitment and to be mindful of what is reasonable for colleagues at all levels of the organisation.

The trust recognises the important work unions have done in recent years on the issue of workload and supports the principle of 1265 hours for teaching staff. The trust ensures that directed time for all teachers is below 1265, while recognising there will never be parity across all schools as the timings of school days differ across the trust. Leaders are clear that the 1265 hours are not a “target” to direct staff up to, so where a colleague is not required to attend a particular directed event for a reason such as not teaching a particular year group, they should not be given directed work to “make up” for that time. Indeed, they should be trusted and allowed to use that time however they choose either in school or at home. Around 50% of our workforce are non-teaching staff.

They form an integral part of our talented workforce and they represent a range of professions. They have clearly defined job descriptions, contracts and working hours, and they work collaboratively to meet the needs of our students. Whilst we appreciate that there are times where our non-teaching staff work outside their normal parameters to meet the needs of our students (e.g. emergency situations where everyone works together to meet student needs and to keep students safe), we do not expect our non-teaching staff to work more than their contracted hours. We recognise that jobs can evolve over time, therefore we encourage non-teaching staff to work with their managers to regularly review their job descriptions, ensuring they accurately reflect the work required and undertaken.

LESSON PLANNING

Planning is critical and it underpins effective teaching. The trust employs highly skilled teachers who plan and deliver high quality teaching and learning. Staff are not expected to submit daily or weekly plans and they are encouraged to spend time collaboratively planning, sharing resources, knowledge and expertise within schools and across the trust. We facilitate this further by actively planning calendared joint training sessions, with joint moderation and joint planning as teams. We are further developing our IT systems to establish systems and processes that minimise the replication of effort across different schools.



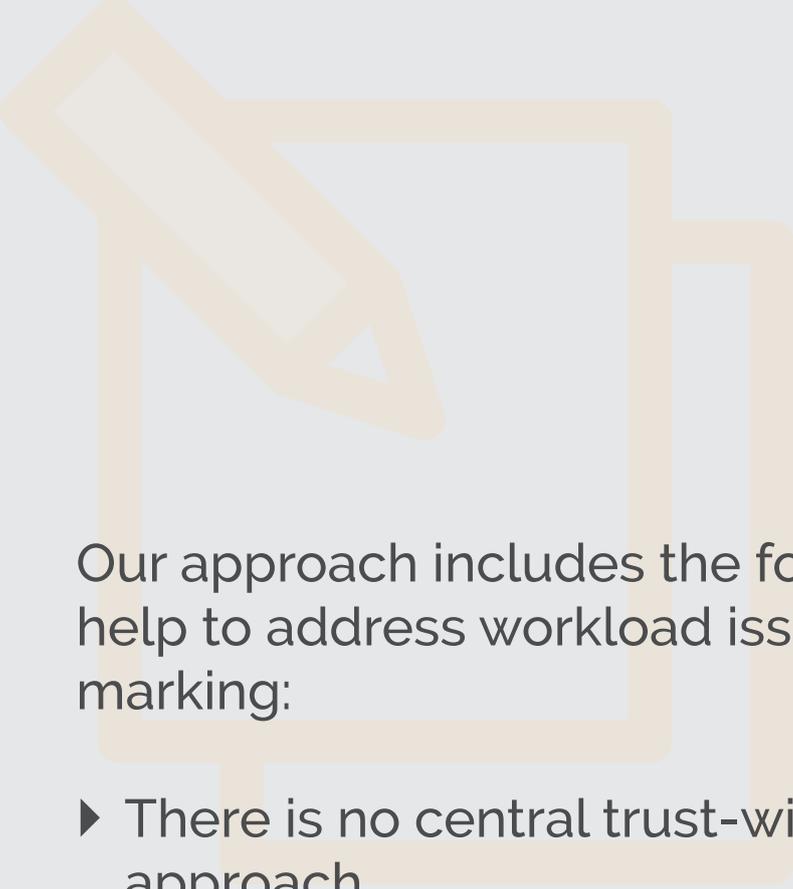
DATA COLLECTION

The trust continues to explore greater use of technology to reduce aspects of teacher workload involved in data collection. Currently, schools collect student performance data only twice a year to ensure they can monitor progress without over-burdening staff. Teachers are only asked to input data that requires their professional judgement. All other data is collected and processed by non-teaching data teams. The frequency of student performance data collection was reduced from four times per year to twice. This ensures more meaningful data on student progress and has reduced workload. The number of attitude to learning grades required have been reduced from four to two. Secondary teachers are not required to write reports and in Primary, only one written report is required each year.

MARKING AND FEEDBACK

The 2014 Workload Challenge survey found that marking policies were the highest workload concern for a majority of teachers. We have consulted with staff to develop a new approach marking based on 3 key principles:

- ▶ Improving students' performance
- ▶ Based on evidence of what works
- ▶ Manageable and reasonable in terms of workload



Our approach includes the following features that help to address workload issues associated with marking:

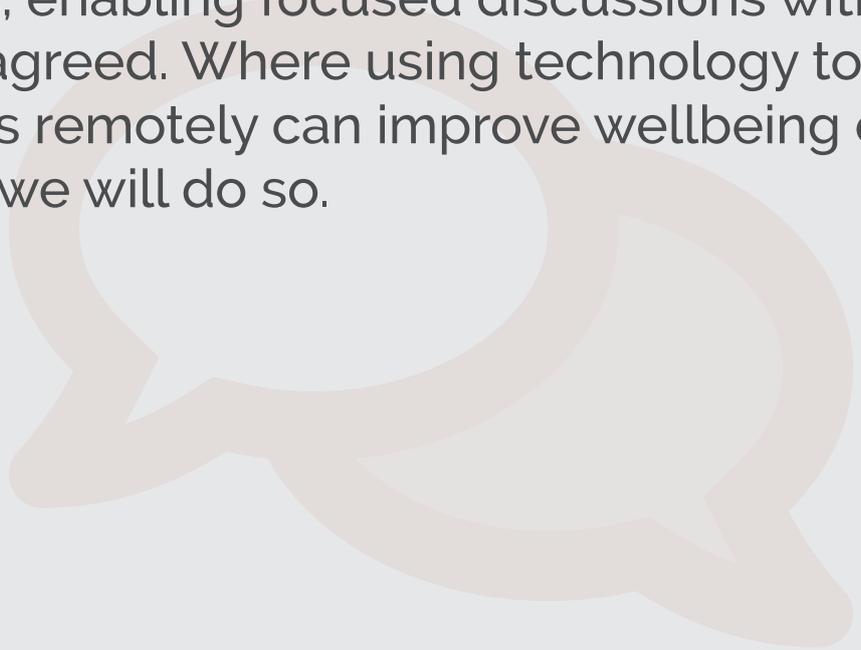
- ▶ There is no central trust-wide or school-wide approach
- ▶ There is no centrally prescribed frequency of written feedback
- ▶ Each subject may have a different approach developed by our subject experts
- ▶ We mark less in terms of the number of pieces of work but with greater impact
- ▶ We should not use acknowledgement marking

MEETINGS

Meetings will usually be arranged in normal working hours. The trust recognises that there may be times with mutual agreement where meetings may take place outside normal working hours. The trust will be mindful of staff health and wellbeing in such circumstances, ensuring staff have reasonable time for breaks and refreshments and attendance at such meetings will be voluntary.

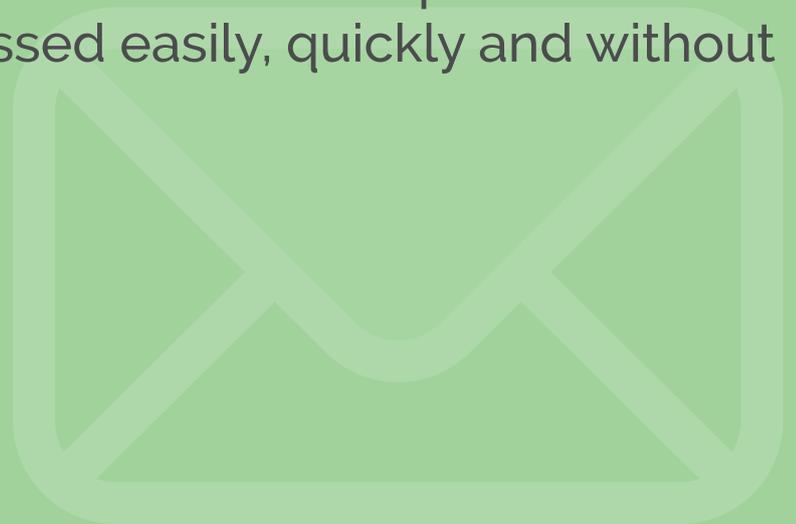


It is important that meetings only take place where they are the most efficient and effective use of staff time. Meetings should never take place simply because they are on a calendar. If there is no longer a need for a planned meeting, leaders are asked to cancel the meeting. Similarly, it is important that the right people are in each meeting so leaders are asked to excuse colleagues whose time could be used more usefully on other things. Meetings should have clear agendas, enabling focused discussions with tangible actions agreed. Where using technology to hold meetings remotely can improve wellbeing or flexibility for staff, we will do so.



EMAILS

There is no expectation that staff respond to emails outside normal working hours. We want all staff to be able to achieve a healthy work-home balance and we trust the professional judgement of our staff to make decisions about when they work outside school hours. While it is appropriate for a member of staff to read and send emails at times that work for them, the sender should not expect the recipient to respond outside normal school times. We ask all staff, including leaders, to refrain where possible, from sending group emails and to think carefully before using the “reply all” function. Messages to all staff should only be sent when they are important and significant for every recipient. Email systems should be set up so that messages can be accessed easily, quickly and without fuss.



INSPECTION

We believe that the best preparation for external inspection is for staff to be able to do the best job they can do, without the additional stress that can be caused by the prospect of the process of inspection. It is the responsibility of the leadership team to prepare the school properly, but this should be done in a way that does not cause significant additional workload for teachers. The trust does not conduct 'mocksteds' that require teachers to provide lesson plans or that involve processes outside the normal monitoring and evaluation and performance management policies. Leaders should be mindful of the messages they send to staff and are asked not to use phrases like 'Ofsted expects to see...'



WORKING PRACTICES

Information regarding how schools might achieve a reasonable approach to workload is emerging and there are an increasing number of case studies available. We will consider all ideas sympathetically and in an open-minded way. Reviews undertaken within the trust will be evidence-based. The trust is committed to keeping the issue of workload at the forefront of all our work, providing staff with clarity and guidance which is developed and reviewed with the trust's recognised trade unions. Where new initiatives are introduced, they should be based on evidence that they are likely to improve student outcomes and ***serious consideration must be given to what we are going to stop doing to 'make space' for what is new.***

The trust and its schools regularly review policies and procedures linked to teacher workload. All new and revised policies are workload impact assessed, ensuring that staff workload is considered in the development of the policy. An essential part of the Head of School's responsibility is to monitor workloads within their schools through staff surveys and regular discussions with staff and to report to the LGB and the CEO. An essential part of the CEO's role is to monitor workloads across the trust, working closely with the trust's Trade Union Forum and meeting regularly with school staff. The CEO also reports to the Board of Trustees and workload forms a part of the reporting and quality assurance process.

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